

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
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P R 272120Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6034
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. THE PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ALBERTO SANTOFIMIO, WILL BE GIVEN A MEDICAL EXAMINATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER HE CAN BE SENT BACK TO PRISON ON CHARGES OF AWARDED FRAUDULENT GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS. SEVERAL OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MAY ALSO FACE ARREST ON SIMILAR CHARGES. THE GOVERNMENT MODIFIED THE CRIMINAL CODE TO GIVE SECURITY FORCES MORE FREEDOM TO USE THEIR WEAPONS IN KIDNAPPING AND DRUG TRAFFICKING CASES. THE CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS ELECTED A NEW PRESIDENT, REPLACING A MAN CHARGED WITH MISUSE OF UNION FUNDS. LEFTIST GUERRILLAS ENGAGED IN SEVERAL PUBLICITY-SEEKING ACTIONS BUT AVOIDED CONTACT WITH SECURITY FORCES. END SUMMARY.

2. HOUSE PRESIDENT CONTINUES TO AVOID IMPRISONMENT; SECOND
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TURBAY SUPPORTER ORDERED ARRESTED. PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ALBERTO SANTOFIMIO, A MAJOR SUPPORTER OF LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL JULIO CESAR TURBAY, WAS RELEASED FROM CONFINEMENT AND ENTERED A PRIVATE HOSPITAL WHERE HE WILL BE EXAMINED BY A GOVERNMENT DOCTOR TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE CONGRESSMAN, WHOSE ARREST AS ORDERED LAST WEEK (BOGOTA 0657), CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO A SPECIAL PRISON IN BOGOTA. THE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY IN CHARGE OF THE CASE ALSO ASKED FOR AN ARREST WARRANT FOR SANTOFIMIO'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE HOUSE, AND THE AUDITOR OF THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S OFFICE, ALL OF WHOM ARE SUSPECTED OF INVOLVEMENT IN THE AWARDED OF ALLEGEDLY FRAUDULENT CONTRACTS. ANOTHER TURBAY SUPPORTER, LIBERAL SENATOR CARLOS MARULANDA, WHO FACES ARREST IN A SEPARATE CASE OF ALLEGED EMBEZZLEMENT, IS STILL AT LARGE.

3. PENAL CODE MODIFIED. A PRESIDENTIAL DECREE MODIFYING THE PENAL CODE TO PROVIDE GREATER FREEDOM OF ACTION TO SECURITY FORCES WAS ISSUED ON JANUARY 21. THE PRINCIPAL CHANGE IN THE CODE WILL PERMIT SECURITY OFFICERS TO USE THEIR WEAPONS DURING OPERATIONS DIRECTED AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKERS, EXTORTIONISTS AND KIDNAPPERS WITH LESS CONCERN THAT THEY WILL LATER BE SUBJECT TO JUDICIAL INQUIRY TO JUSTIFY THEIR USE OF FORCE. OPPONENTS OF THE DECREE OBJECT THAT IT AMOUNTS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, WHICH IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL IN COLOMBIA, AND WITHOUT EVEN OFFERING THE ALLEGED CRIMINALS THE BENEFIT OF TRIAL, BUT THE GENERAL PUBLIC REACTION APPEARS TO BE FAVORABLE.

4. NEW PRESIDENT FOR LABOR CONFEDERATION. THE CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (CT) ELECTED MANUEL FELIPE JURTADO, FORMERLY THE CTC VICE PRESIDENT, TO REPLACE GUSTAVO DIAZ RAGA AS CTC PRESIDENT. HURTADO HAD BEEN INTERIM PRESIDENT SINCE 24 NOVEMBER 1977, WHEN DIAZ WAS FIRST SUSPENDED FROM HIS POST. DIAZ HAS BEEN HEAVILY CRITICIZED FOR ALLEGED MISUSE OF CTC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FUNDS, BUT HIS FAILURE TO COOPERATE WITH THE CTC EXECUTIVE BOARD DURING HIS ADMINISTRATION IS BELIEVED TO BE THE REAL REASON FOR HIS REPLACEMENT. TERESA VALENCIA, THE DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, ALSO CHARGED WITH MISUSE OF UNION FUNDS, WAS NOT RE-ELECTED.

5. PUBLIC ORDER. LEFTIST GUERRILLAS ENGAGED IN SEVERAL ACTIONS THIS WEEK AIMED PRIMARILY AT GAINING PUBLICITY. THE M-19 BURNED A LUMBER YARD IN YUMBO N VALLE DEPARTMENT AND HARRANGUED THE CROWD BEFORE FLEEING INTO THE JUNGLE. ANOTHER GROUP OF ARMED AND HOODED M-19 MEMBERS INTERRUPTED AN ANAPO POLITICAL MEETING IN MEDELLIN AND EXPLAINED THEIR POLITICAL POSITION TO THE CROWD BEFORE ESCAPING. THE CUBAN-LINE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY (ELN) BOMBED THE HOME OF RECTOR OF SANTANDER INDUSTRIAL UNIVERSITY, APPARENTLY TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES WITH STUDENT AGITATION AT THE UNIVERSITY .

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Message Attributes

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